



Seen & Heard

A magazine about
**GERMANTOWN
FRIENDS SCHOOL**



Rooted in a neighborhood that represents Philadelphia’s rich history of hope and progress, **Germantown Friends School is a place of compassionate integrity, thoughtful service, intellectual curiosity, and true community.** In this magazine, we proudly share our stories—our experiences, our reflections, our brilliance, and our Light.

Inside:

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|----|------------------------------------|
| 2 | Snap: The Joy of Movement | 20 | Skillshare |
| 4 | On the Spot | 22 | 365 Days of Research in 60 Seconds |
| 6 | Why This Class Worked | 24 | Active Hope |
| 8 | A Seat in the Boat for Everyone | 26 | Snap: US Orchestra |
| 10 | That Meeting Moment | 28 | Where I Went and How I Got There |
| 12 | Have a Seat | 30 | A Few of My Favorite Things |
| 14 | Family Portraits | 32 | Workbook |
| 16 | Welcome to the Neighborhood | | |
| 18 | A Year of Ancient Cultures | | |

Snap

The Joy of Movement

Movement inspires joy and connection, but its positive impact on students goes deeper, activating neural pathways that strengthen their learning and development. This is the founding premise of GFS' Theatre Movement Arts curriculum which starts in Early Childhood; on our Main and Center City campuses, our youngest learners explore different ways to move every day. "This helps students develop a mindfulness about their body, and to express, connect, and communicate through movement," says teacher Corinne Robkin '00.

A large rainbow-colored parachute becomes a hot air balloon ride. Students pretend the route takes them on straight, curved, and zig-zagging pathways, which enhances their ability to make various shapes and kinds of motion. Corinne says, "I love working with this age group because their creativity is right at the surface. I hope that by celebrating that now, they'll carry a love for movement throughout their lives."



on the SPOT

Burning questions, answered

Isaac

What makes for a world-class soccer team?
Cohesion. A good team is one where you know the strengths and capabilities of each of your teammates, and everyone works on the same wavelength.



Miya

Who are some of your favorite artists?
It's hard to choose! This year I did research on three Black female artists: Augusta Savage, Elizabeth Catlett, and Lois Mailou Jones. They are so inspiring.



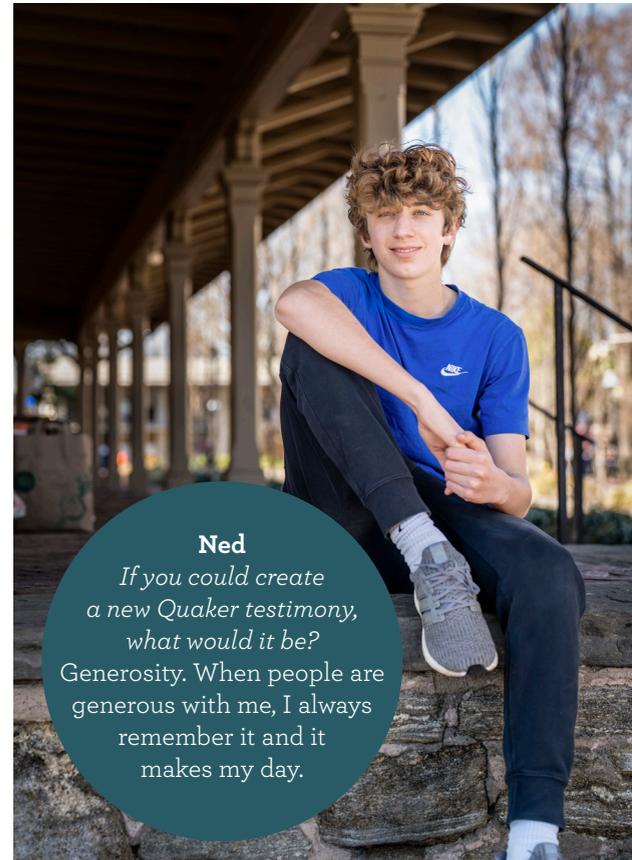
Vienna

If you could be any animal, what would you be?
I would want to be a monkey so I can swing through the trees and eat mangos every day. Mangos are my favorite fruit!



Ned

If you could create a new Quaker testimony, what would it be?
Generosity. When people are generous with me, I always remember it and it makes my day.



Why This Class Worked

Two students and a teacher break down the elements of a successful eighth-grade science project

Jessa Werner: This is a project that students take home and study on their own. Each student has their own jar where they try to form an ecosystem. Each jar has an atmosphere, a lithosphere, a substrate, water, plants, and animals. Through the lab we studied photosynthesis, cellular respiration, water quality, the carbon cycle—everything that needs to exist to support life.

Fern: In our ecosphere, we used a plant called moneywort, and we used water from Jessa’s aquarium instead of Wissahickon pond water. We have two snails in it, a baby and an adult.

Jessa: Everyone gets a snail, or multiple snails, to regulate the carbon cycle. One group had surprise snail eggs, so now they have six teeny-tiny snails.

Talia: I love watching the snails—ours are named Scrappy and Alaska, and they’re both doing great. This lab is one of my favorite things to do because it’s so interactive.

Jessa: When students take responsibility for their learning—for an entire ecosphere!—amazing things happen.



A Seat in the Boat for Everyone

The GFS crew program centers
inclusion and accessibility

The defining feature of GFS' crew program is its culture of equity. Every team member begins their journey as novices in the Learn to Row workshop, which introduces rowers to the basics of competition, safety on the water, and more. No matter a student's experience or skill level, all are welcome.

"There are opportunities for all student-athletes, all body types, and all genders," says GFS Athletic Director Katie Bergstrom Mark. "Our teams consist of elite athletes in other sports, athletes who want to try something new, and students who haven't participated in competitive sports before."

And, in a sport that requires financial contributions from families, GFS offers generous Non-Tuition Financial Aid to

make crew accessible to anyone who wants to join.

"GFS crew has a seat in the boat for everyone," Bergstrom Mark notes.

Anand Rajagopalan knew almost nothing about rowing when he came to GFS as a ninth grader. He gave the sport a try, starting from scratch in the Learn to Row program. Three years later, he was co-captain of the team, and after graduating, committed to row for the University of Pennsylvania.

"It's hard to imagine what it would've been like if I hadn't come to GFS, decided to row, and experienced what rowing has meant for so many aspects of my life," he says.

That Meeting Moment

Students talk about the meaning of Meeting for Worship

Tessa: I love hearing the messages people share in Meeting for Worship. Meeting is a safe space where people feel comfortable sharing their feelings. It brings the community together in such a perfect way.

Grayson: Standing up and putting your thoughts into the world can be nerve-wracking. But when a message resonates, it becomes empowering. Last week was one of those moments. One person stood up and spoke about perseverance, inspiring others to speak as well. It was the most thought-provoking Meeting I've attended.

Laxmi: When I'm in Meeting, I try not to think about anything. It's hard! I'll often end up going over my day or planning the work I have to do. But I try to clear my mind, focus on breathing, and stay in the present.

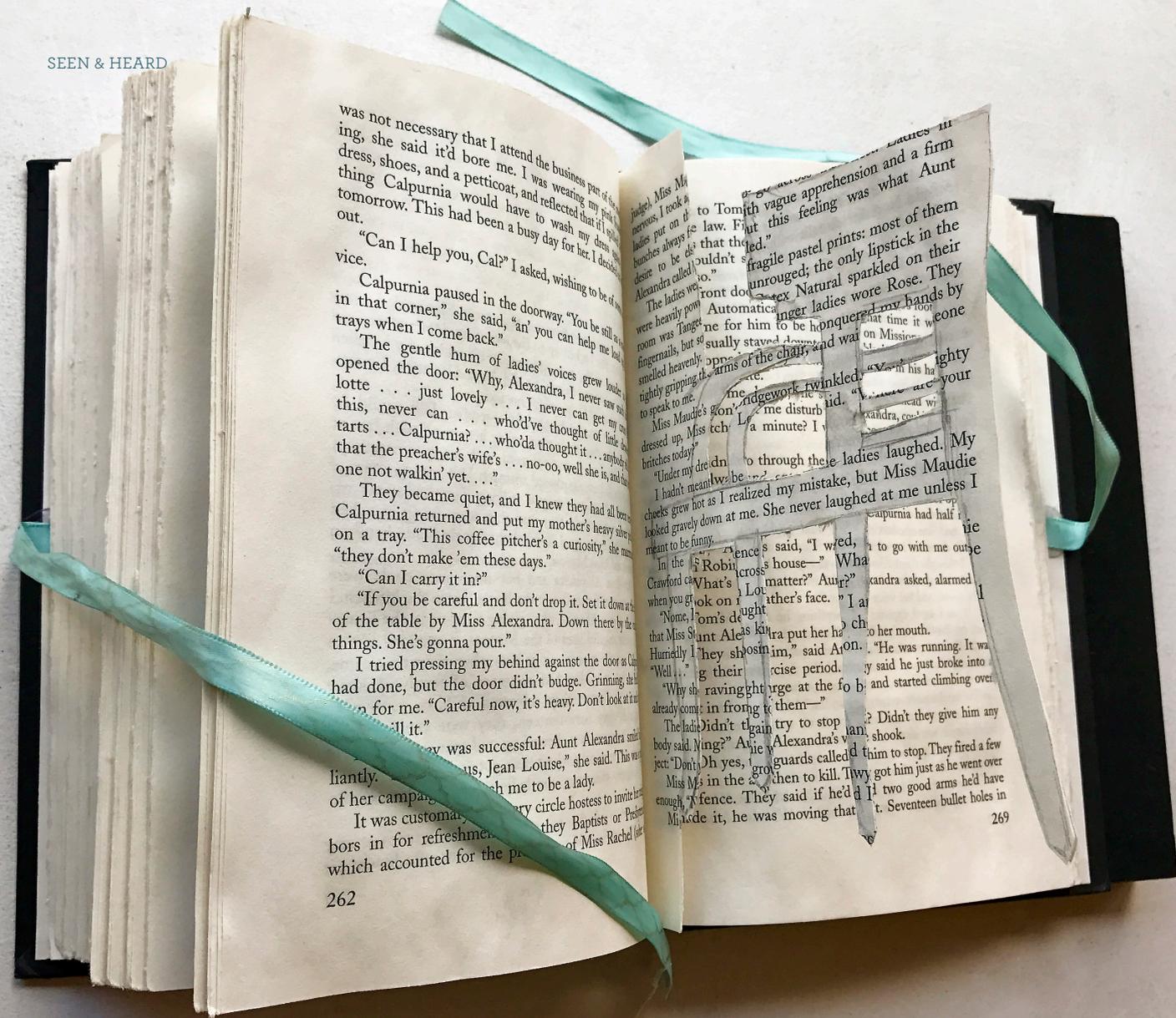
Taaj: For me, it's a time to think about something calming. Whether it's about someone I love or something I love doing, thinking about these things during Meeting for Worship puts my mind at peace.

Noah: I don't go into Meeting for Worship with specific thoughts or ideas. Sometimes people say things that are interesting, funny, or unexpected, and it's great simply to listen.

Madison: I remember one year a first grader stood up and said that the day before was a really good day because her mom let her eat ice cream before dinner. Hearing that reminded me to appreciate the little things that can make me happy.



In the Meetinghouse, left to right:
Tessa, Grayson, Laxmi, Madison, Taaj, Noah.



Have a Seat

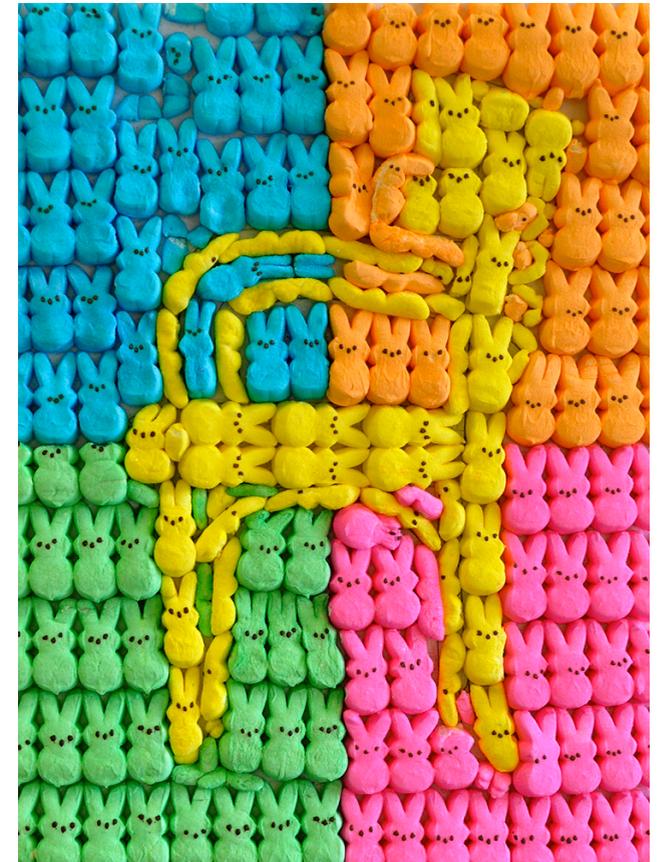
The story of the beloved, often life-changing experience known as the Chair Project

Heather Chu Marvill, Middle School Art Faculty: The Chair Project is one of those assignments that kids loved so much, it became a tradition. Now our eighth graders see it as their graduation from Middle School art. It's the culmination of all the skills they've learned, from formal observation to conceptual development.

Megan Culp, Art Department Head: At this stage in their development, students are ready to get more sophisticated. And they have a strong drive to express themselves. The Chair Project lets them do both.

Heather: They start with a chair that's been at the school for many years—and then they challenge themselves to represent it in a new way. One student made a chair song—which became the soundtrack for the exhibit we put on at the end of the project. One student programmed a robot to draw a chair. One made a chair out of ice cubes and filmed a time-lapse video of it melting into nothing.

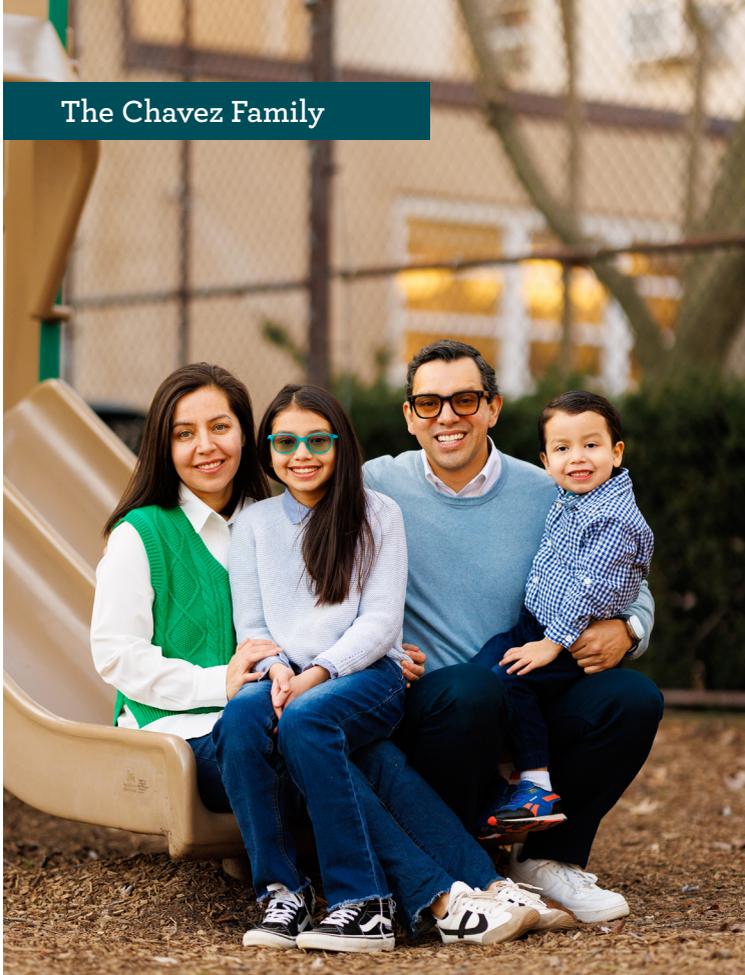
Megan: Our school culture holds art close. We see it as a vital part of our education. As an art teacher, this is as good as it gets.



The Van Cleve Family



The Chavez Family



Family Portraits

Four families, four GFS journeys

The Van Cleve Family

GFS is more than a school to Kathy Van Cleve. It's her support system. "When I was sick last year, all the parents rallied around me," Kathy says. "Honestly, my closest friends are the parents I met when the boys"—Jackson and Emerson—"were in Kindergarten. Every morning we meet in my garage to work out."

Kathy and Emory volunteer at GFS, teaching screenwriting and production workshops at the annual, student-run Philadelphia Youth Film Festival (both are professors at the University of Pennsylvania), and have seen remarkable work from GFS students—but they're most impressed by the school's values. "The school runs on the idea that everyone deserves respect," says Kathy. "The boys have really absorbed that. This is a culture that develops good humans with integrity."

The Chavez Family

After living and working across the globe, Josue Chavez and Jackie Anchondo and their young children, Alejandro and Annalisa, moved to Philadelphia in 2022. The couple researched independent schools in the area, and chose GFS because of its emphasis on community and diversity. Right away, they felt welcomed.

"Before we even arrived, we received letters from each of Annalisa's classmates," Jackie remembers. "It felt like we were meant to be here."

In the years since, the Chavezes have watched their children blossom at GFS.

Jackie says: "We found in GFS a partner to help shape our kids' minds. It's not only about academic excellence, but a deep sense of curiosity and social responsibility, challenging perspectives, and developing a lifelong love of learning."

The Cornejo Family

For Rebecca and Luis Cornejo, choosing GFS was easy. "We wanted academic rigor, but also a school that focuses on the whole child," says Rebecca, "and GFS has a unique way of making education different for each student. They respect students for the individual contributions they make to the community, and allow them to be their authentic selves."

It's a choice that has led to immense growth in the Cornejos' daughters, Leah and Rachel. Says Rebecca: "They're so much more organized, have better study habits, and have an admirable amount of self-awareness. I wish Luis and I had had these skills at their age. We are so grateful to GFS for fostering these vital life skills."

The Jones Family

"I trust this place with my family," Brandon Jones '00 says. With a 25-year history at GFS—first as a student and standout basketball player, then as a coach, assistant athletic director, admissions director, and director of alumni relations—Brandon's affection has been well earned. "GFS is a home away from home," he explains. "I can be myself here."

Brandon's three children already feel the same way. "They are so excited about GFS," Brandon says. "My son comes home and immediately wants to share what he's learned that day. My daughter gushes about the community and the people. My youngest—well, she's still early in her GFS career, but has always been a Tiger at heart."

The Cornejo Family



The Jones Family



Welcome to the Neighborhood



THROUGH OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM, WE COLLABORATE ON PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES WITH OUR GERMANTOWN NEIGHBORS

- Covenant House:** A shelter for unhoused youth and survivors of trafficking, GFS provides hats, socks, and gloves for the residents.
- Cradles to Crayons:** Spearheaded by the GFS Parents Association, we donate diapers, clothing, and books.
- Face To Face Germantown:** GFS provides snack and toiletry kits to this community center, which also serves as a primary site for our seventh-grade service and community engagement project.
- Germantown Community Fridge:** We help clean, organize, and provide food donations.
- Holsey Temple:** GFS students and community members serve hot meals to those in need, and donate food monthly.
- James Logan Elementary School:** Through the Community Schools program, we support strategic partnerships that promote wellness, stability, and learning opportunities for students.
- John B. Kelly School:** GFS supports this local elementary school's Books on the Go take-home library with an annual donation drive of gently used books each May.
- Mastery Charter School Pickett Campus:** GFS students partner with classes and collaborate on projects.
- Pennsylvania School for the Deaf:** GFS students take sign language classes as part of our DIS program.
- St. Luke's Church:** Along with monthly food donations, students volunteer to organize the food pantry and create bags of groceries for those in need.
- Stenton Family Manor:** During the winter holidays, GFS organizes a toy drive and sit-down dinner on campus for the residents of this shelter.
- Whosoever Gospel Mission:** Providing aid for unhoused men and women, GFS donates food every month. The Lower School Family Baking Club provides bread and cookies baked every Thursday in the Meetinghouse kitchen.
- Wissahickon Charter School, Awbury Campus:** Young students receive tutoring from GFS' Upper School Education Justice Club.
- Wister Elementary Mastery Charter School:** GFS students partner with classes and collaborate on projects.

A FEW FAVORITE LOCAL BUSINESSES

- Gaffney Fabrics
- Uncle Bobbie's Coffee & Books
- Lily of the Valley Cupcakery & Cafe
- Salam Cafe
- Giovanni's Pizzeria
- K & J Caribbean American Diner
- Bargain Thrift Center



A Year of Ancient Cultures

Two teachers talk about fourth grade's yearlong exploration of the past



Sarah Pacifico: GFS has always had a strong Classics program. Our fourth graders study ancient cultures, with a focus on Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece, in an interdisciplinary humanities experience. Developmentally, fourth grade is a great time for this: students are able to conceptualize “long ago and far away,” and ask questions about belonging and power.

Madeleine Perlmutter: In our Ancient Egypt unit, we examine archaeology and how we study the past. We ask: *What can an artifact teach us about a person or civilization?* We go on a field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to see its collection of artifacts. This brings up interesting ethical discussions about whether mummies should be in museums.

Sarah: Studying two cultures helps us go deeper by comparing them. We look closely at geography, how waterways and soil types affected how ancient people lived. We juxtapose the art of the two cultures and see how they were influenced by one another.

Maddie: In social studies, the Ancient Greece study goes into structure, power, and government, then into the Olympics as a religious practice. In reading, we delve into Greek mythology. Fourth grade is such a year of meaning-making, and myths help make sense of the world around us. I think that's part of the reason why kids this age are so into Greek mythology.

Sarah: The culmination is Olympics Day, which happens every spring and is one of GFS' treasured Lower School traditions. The students design t-shirts with their own personal seal, which connects to our identity work. They learn about the events in P.E. class, then we hold a mini track meet complete with an opening ceremony, to remind them that the Olympics were a way to honor the gods, not just an athletic event. It's fun to see them working together on the field—being competitive but also practicing good sportsmanship.



Skillshare

Lower School art teacher Khaleel Adger on how to make art

1. Look around.

Look at art, look at the world around you. I get inspired by watching people, walking around the neighborhood, being in nature. As you're looking, ask yourself: What does this make me feel? What am I wondering about it? All that looking and asking will lead to an idea.

2. Do research.

In my classes, we always study art history. We look at reference books—I have a big library in my classroom. And we look at examples of the things we want to draw.

3. Make sketches.

I ask my students to do more than one. You may think your first idea is the right idea, but you never know until you try something different.

4. Get feedback.

Ask friends or family members to look at your sketches with you. What do they notice? What gets them excited? From there, you can decide which sketch to work with; or maybe you combine different sketches.

5. Draw a more developed sketch.

Even if you're making something three-dimensional, you'll want a finished drawing.

6. Stop.

You almost never finish. But at some point, you decide to stop. Maybe you'll come back to it later, like da Vinci did with the *Mona Lisa*. Art is a process. You can always learn more, see more, keep improving.





365 Days of Research in 60 Seconds

Three students give a whirlwind tour of their
Directed Independent Study

American Sign Language

Cece

My DIS is a class of three students and our teacher. We've been studying ASL together for three years. We practice vocabulary, grammar, facial expressions. At the end of class, we'll often have off-script conversations in ASL.

In third grade, I saw pictures of the ASL alphabet in my classroom. I thought it was beautiful. Two friends and I decided to start learning the language; one of those friends is now in the DIS!

I think it's important to be able to communicate with the people in my community. GFS is right next to the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf, and we have deaf faculty members on campus. Learning ASL is a way to connect with the people around me.

Sewing & Garment Construction

Andrew

I'm learning to design and create clothing from start to finish. I get to explore my creativity and learn new abilities in a focused, personal way. The whole experience has shaped my understanding of art and clothing.

My faculty advisor has decades of experience in costume design. She's been an incredible mentor, brainstorming projects that stretch my skill set. Currently, I'm working with her to design the costumes for the ninth-grade musical, *Coraline*.

This is the first show I've costumed, so I'm learning through experience. Incorporating historical references, working on a budget, translating a character's personality to their clothes, applying what I learned about composition and color theory from art classes—it's all coming together.

Investment

Will Bishop '92 (advisor), Gabe

Gabe: When I had extra time during the pandemic, I became interested in finance and investing. So I was really excited to find out that GFS had an Investment DIS. In the class, I was able to create a portfolio consisting of funds that I had personally researched. Then our class used the research to create an investment plan. I was happy to contribute to the class with work I had done on my own and I felt like the teachers really valued my opinion.

Will: I came to GFS almost 15 years ago to teach a class on financial literacy as a way of preparing seniors for college and the real world. That led me to teaching Investment DIS, which I treat as an open forum for discussion as we all work together to cultivate ideas for investment. I love hearing younger perspectives on the world, so the class has been incredibly rewarding.



Active Hope

The Environmental Action Club (EAC) counters climate anxiety by facilitating joyful, creative, and effective campaigns and activities on campus throughout the year

Sam Thacker, history teacher and faculty advisor: EAC students are talented activists interested in changing the world for the better, and I think that I have an important part to play in helping them develop as young leaders in our community and beyond. I help them think through their ideas and connect them with resources. We spend a lot of time discussing strategies for social change.

Zoe, student EAC member: One of the main goals of Upper School EAC is making GFS the most sustainably-minded place possible. Whether your strength lies in activism, advocacy, art, design, education, communication, or you just have a passion for environmentalism, there is a place for you in the EAC. It feels so rewarding to get involved in climate work, and feel like you're making a difference, even on a small scale.

Jay, student EAC member: We organize dozens of events and projects throughout the school year. I think our biggest success has been the clothing swap. It is a really accessible way to get other students involved in our mission, and it has been very popular, to the point where we organize three swaps a year!

Naomi, student EAC member: Being part of the EAC makes me feel more hopeful because we're doing things to help. Last year, during All-School Meeting for Worship, we noticed many of the younger kids talking about climate change, and some seemed a little hopeless. So, the EAC came to a Lower School assembly and shared examples of the everyday things they can do to help fight climate change. Maybe they'll even join EAC in Upper School!



Snap

Upper School orchestra rehearsal

“Danzón No. 2, by Arturo Márquez, is a frenzy,” says violinist Beier. *“In each rehearsal, I’d feel so many different things at once.”*

“When you play music together, you’re essentially resonating together,” shares the director of orchestras. *“You’re connected by a common frequency.”*



Where I Went and How I Got There

Six GFS alumni on the past, their present,
and your future

John Relman '75 civil rights litigator

"GFS played an enormous role in my decision to devote my life to social justice work. With the Vietnam War raging and racial justice issues at the forefront of the news, we debated the issues of our time in class, offered our thoughts and views in Meeting for Worship, and discussed with classmates and teachers what our contributions as citizens should be to making the world more just. We talked about what it meant to share and live Quaker values—to see and love the good in each person."

Olivia Weaver '14 professional squash player

"I played on the GFS squash team for five seasons, and it was one of my most cherished experiences. But the greatest lesson GFS taught me was how to enjoy the process of learning and to look at the world through a lens of curiosity. I was encouraged to become an empathetic, thoughtful, and enthusiastic participant in the world."

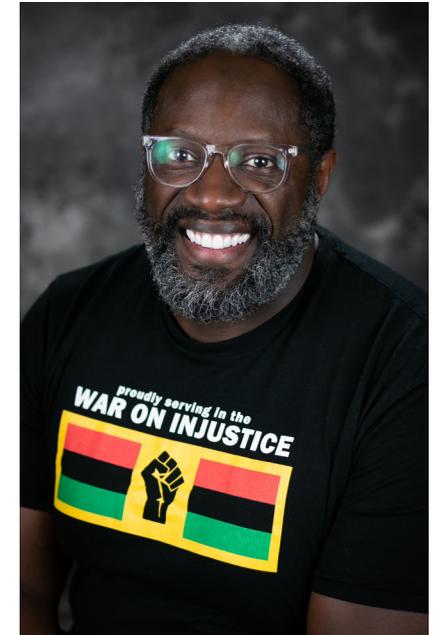
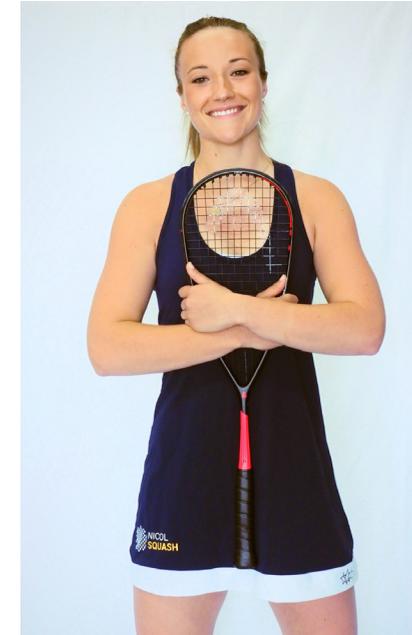
André Robert Lee '89 filmmaker, teacher, and activist

"At GFS, my mind was awakened. My teachers pushed me to think in new ways, opened my heart, and encouraged me to do my best. Meeting for Worship was especially important in centering myself on a consistent basis. I learned how powerful it is to stop everything for a moment and just take in the world. When you take the time to reflect on it, the world is expansive and beautiful."

Kristen Welker '94 Host of NBC's "Meet the Press"

"My passion for politics and journalism is in many ways rooted in my upbringing in Philadelphia and in my education at GFS. Philadelphia is where I first learned about the power of being an active participant in the democratic process. At GFS, I learned the importance of caring about your neighbors, giving back, and trying to make the world a better place. I try to bring those lessons to my career as a journalist and am excited to pass them on to my children."

Clockwise from top left: John Relman, Olivia Weaver, André Robert Lee, Abby Maxman, Jeff Marrasso, and Kristen Welker.

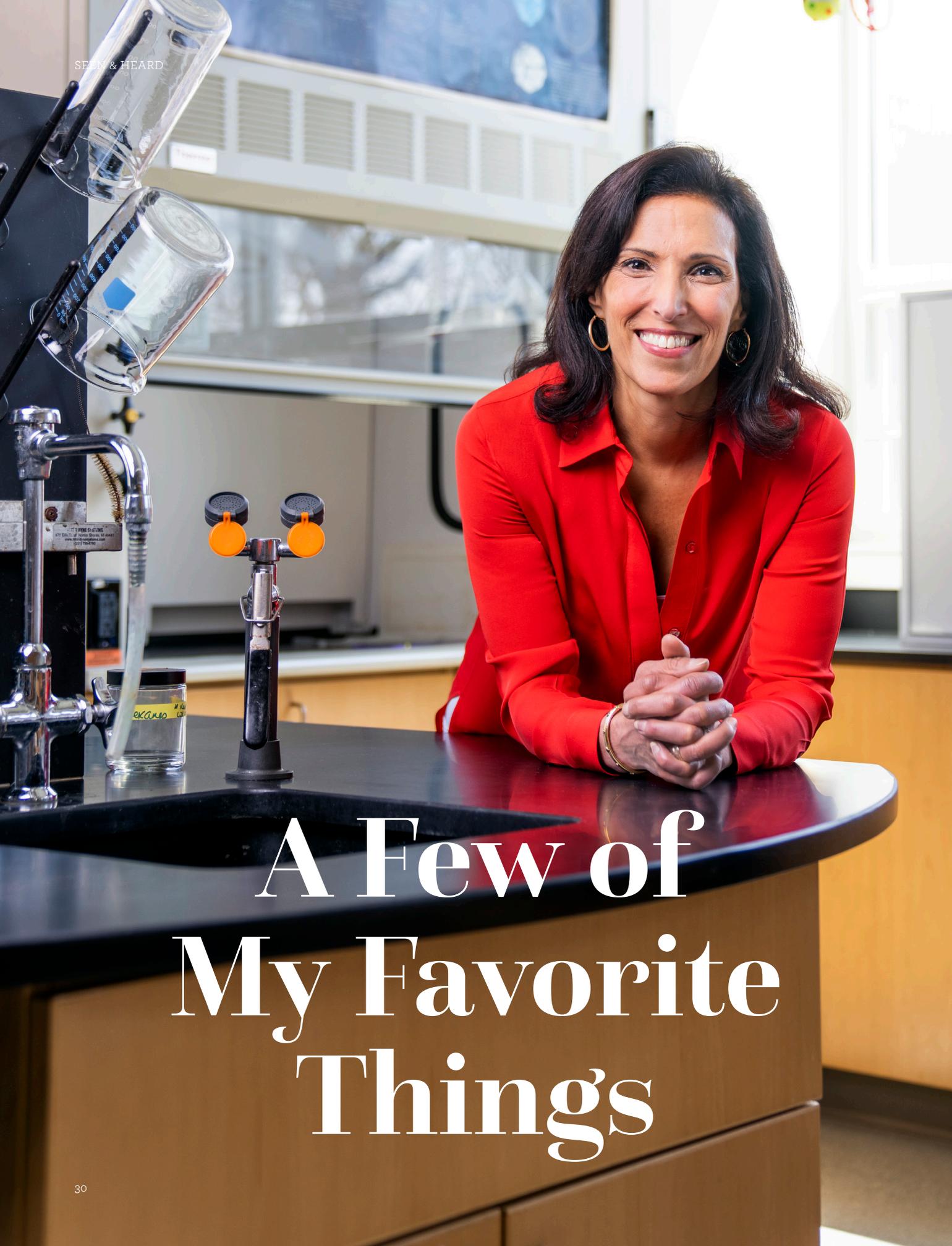


Jeff Marrasso '96 Co-founder and Former CEO of Spark Therapeutics

"At GFS, I was challenged by both my teachers and classmates, particularly in subjects that didn't come easily. Through music I found avenues to expand my creative capacity. On the athletic field, I attempted to lead others for the first time. And through independent study and Junior Project work, I discovered the joy of hands-on scientific discovery. But most of all, GFS instilled in me a compassion for others and the confidence to make a difference by creating my own path."

Abby Maxman '84 President and CEO of Oxfam America

"My commitment to service was instilled early on through the gift of my GFS education. I encourage today's students to keep a critical mind, challenge their assumptions, and never stop learning. I continue to learn every day—about my behaviors, assumptions, leadership, and perspectives. And I continue to give love and light to others in the way I want it to shine on me."



A Few of My Favorite Things

A short list of things that matter to Head of School Dana Weeks

1. Favorite place on campus

Wherever there are kids. Right now I'm seeing Lower School students in the graveyard outside my office. I know: How many schools have a dead graveyard? That's what we call it: The Dead Graveyard. It's kind of absurd, which is why I like it.

2. Favorite book

I read poetry every morning: Mary Oliver's *Devotions*. No one is up in my house, no lights are on, and I sit on the couch and read by the flashlight on my phone. I open the book and read whatever poem happens to be there. What I love about Mary Oliver is that she saw the world in a way I never see it. There's always something new to me in her work.

3. Favorite mentor

Joan "Penny" Colgan-Davis. She was a Quaker, the former head of several Quaker schools, and the clerk of the Germantown Monthly Meeting. I had the good fortune to work with her when I first arrived at GFS. I had never seen a woman command a meeting like she did. She was so empathetic, such a great listener, so strong in the face of conflict. She had earned respect and power, but she didn't carry herself that way. She was a weighty Quaker, as Quakers would say. I try to channel her as much as I can.

4. Favorite way to relax

OK, this one stumped me. I think I need to relax more. Oh! I swim. And I love it. When I'm underwater, no one can talk to me. I count my strokes—2,500, about three-quarters of a mile—and then I'm done. I only learned how to swim nine or 10 years ago. I saw some friends swimming in a lake and I thought: "If they can do it, I can do it." So I got some pointers from videos online and jumped in.

5. Favorite GFS moment

Our Upper School put on a play called *Every Brilliant Thing*. It starts with a boy whose mother dies by suicide. As a coping mechanism, he makes a list of every brilliant thing on earth he's grateful for. It was originally a one-man show, but our director—Jake Miller, who's truly genius—cast it in multiple roles, with multiple casts. The students did a school-wide gratitude project; every item on the list of brilliant things came from our community. The kids were so proud, so present. I burst into tears many times. It captured something special about this place. When we give students the tools and the permission, they're capable of doing extraordinary things.



Workbook

What we're making right now

Autumn Leaves

This poem was loosely inspired by a school camping trip.

And then trees blanketed the ground in velvety, appreciative dirt

coating its crimson chord changes with

the notes of our shoe-sole symphonic

jigsaw. Feet conduct their crisp, crushed

staccatos with thanks for the fluttered

swings of bird-wing bated breath, blowing

the sky blues away with the sway of

seasons. They leave their vamping to puff

spirit into the timber pockets we

resurrect from dead twigs and amber

piano-key kindling. We stomp,

beat by beat, the brass bass of the forest,

picking the thicket of its branches.

We whisper our gratuitudes to grooves,

to the free-flaming soloists of

the grove, smoke chasing the sound of sax

through stars that nestle their stage in the

embrace of maple limbs overhead.

Bless the rightness of this rhythm, how

it splinters the running of time with

its horned riffs splaying the tenor tones,

the crimson changes axed at our feet,

discrete as Adderley's

Autumn Leaves.

I compared the changing seasons to music because we listened to a lot of jazz during the trip.

This image had been stuck in my head for a while.

My poetry teacher, Sam Sullivan, has taught me so much about manipulating the syntax of my work to strengthen the images I evoke.

I love using personification!

I tried to use alliteration to replicate the fluidity of the music's rhythm.

While I wrote this poem, I listened to Cannonball Adderley's rendition of the jazz standard Autumn Leaves on repeat. The Germantown Friends community has given me a greater appreciation of jazz music.

This poem by Willow, which she wrote for the Upper School Poetry Workshop, compares the beauty of the changing seasons to her growing appreciation for jazz music. "I enjoy building connections and conjuring shared emotions through interesting images," she says, adding that "reading someone else's work affords me the privilege of seeing the world from their perspective."





Main Campus: 31 West Coulter Street, Philadelphia, PA 19144

Center City Campus for Early Childhood: 601 Walnut Street, Curtis Center, Philadelphia, PA 19106

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